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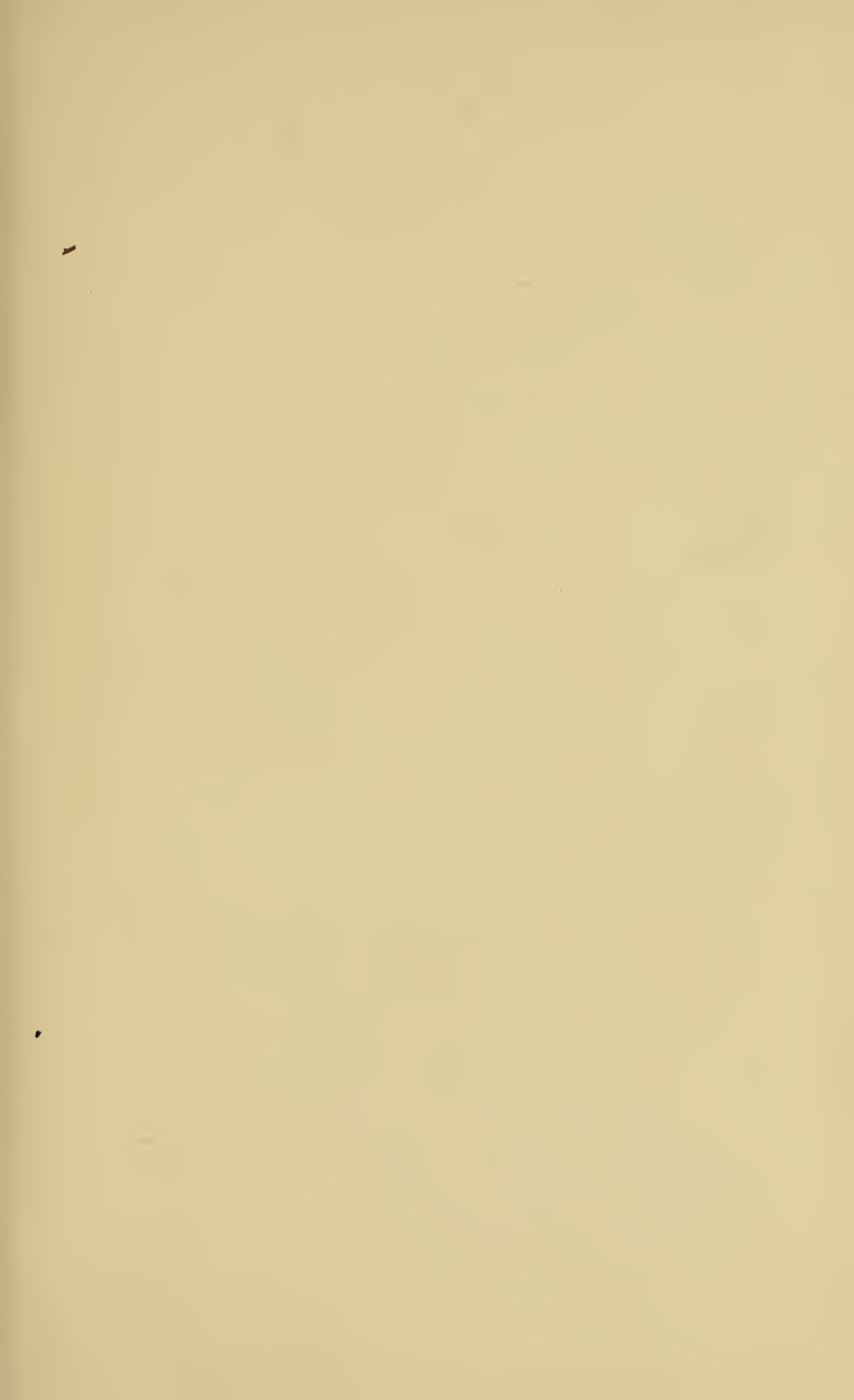
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NIGHT ETCHINGS.

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NIGHT ETCHINGS.

BY
A. R. G.



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PROEM.

BATS and owls, just birds of night are we,
Yet something 'tis if through the dark we see.

A BAT AWAKES.

BY THE AMAZON.

UNDER low, drooping eaves
Of dew-touched leaves
Hangs sleeper strange, with pendent head :
His pillow floating there,
Soft-toned Brazilian air ;
His hushing lullaby
Broad waters lapping by ;
Still, in their breadth and depth,
Great, in their constancy.

The wide, sun-glaring day
Has lulled him so to sleep,

Shutting away the sky;
Then through the vampire's pulse doth creep
The heavy drowse of tropic's noon;
He wakes not for the nearer rhythm and tune
Of things terrestrial:
To sights and sounds of earth alone,
By daylight's glamour shown,
He shuts the eye.

Let the red warmth of cacti glow,
But not for him;
His eye will slumber till this nearer world
grows dim.

Let the sun-angel's iridescence dart,
While reigns the day,
Before all life of color faints to gray;
Dazzle and dart, while yet she has the light,

Coquetting she, perchance, with some fond
 suitor's heart,
Before she folds her wings down to the
 night.

But when, beneath low, drooping eaves
Of dew-touched leaves,
Day dies away,
Melting from gray
Into the deep transparency of night,
The bat awakes to music of the spheres;
To hint of time out-spun,
And life and love to come;—
Then darts he forth, this flitter-mouse with
 wings,
Earth-nature his, with courage yet to
 soar;

Forth comes he, and behold! A world
Below, above, before,
That day sees not, nor children of the day,
Soft creatures! sleeping warm, away;
Sleeping,—nor dreaming of the shadowed
land
As rolls she with the light, night-wrecked,
upon her strand;
While on the Orellana, silent unwraps a
view
Making display alone to owls and bats,
As upward lifts the curtain, Southern-starred,
And hangs above a world sweet-steeped in
dew.

Then, from low, drooping eaves
Of aromatic leaves,

The vampire comes again upon his life,—

A life with moons and midnights rife.

'Tis his, the eye to learn

How lights of Capricorn can burn,

Or how, in scented flower-urn,

There resteth low

The fire-worm's glow ;

And how broad seas of cotton blow,

Like downs of warmth-touched tropic snow,

Beneath a June-eyed moon :

A zenith moon

Whose silver noon

Teacheth to night the purity of love ;

Lightening and whitening what aside were

dark ;

Tender, yet white and high, the shades above.

And so the bat awakes,
Leaving day's world and daylight cares to
sleep.

The bat awakes and has his world alone.
Shaded from glare, he sees the better, far;
Can catch the beckon of some high, clear
star;

Can hear, resounding near,
The interthrilling murmur of each sphere;
His world a world of seeing far, of listening
deep,

While others, blind to night, lie wrapped in
sleep;

Nor knowing how night-silvered waves
New symphonies can sing,
Nor how from out night-jewelled flowers
New sweets the airs can bring.

And his the ear to hear
The night-bird weird,
Or some low-curling wave,
Where Xingu waters lave
Their green-crept, lavish banks,
With sweet, insisting pranks.
To hear night-winds across the still world
 roam,
Light-whispering on moon-touched lotos
 bloom,
Or murmuring song divine
O'er some strong height of pine
That reaches, silver-crested, out of shadows'
 gloom ;
Or thrilling with its kiss
Some palm of royal grace
To sweet, all-trembling bliss ;

Or sighing up from far Atlantic ways
Some softened note of world-filled Eastern
days.

Oh, would, from off that far Atlantic shore,
This constant, west-blown wind might carry
some,
Who, tired and fainting to their being's
core,
Would rest them on the nights of Amazon;
Where peace drops down the silver noons,
And silence sings caressing monotunes.

A RUIN OF RETROSPECT.

THAT day that's gone!

Away, way back how faint its gleam!

How long the shadows thrown by years that
intervene!

I peer back through the dust and webs of
time;

The light strikes only on a fragment here
and there,

Some slender point that reached the higher
air,

Leaving the picture but a broken rhyme.

Only a tower here, a gable there,

Glimmers against the rays of western sun;

So dense the maze has intertwined between
To-day and that far day of Life Begun.
Only a broken line, a curve unfilled,
A half-lost memory standing there,
Like ruin of some castle in the air.

I strain my gaze to interpenetrate
The mists that hide that which I fain would
 see ;
To catch some, now, time-faded ray
That fell upon my life that sunny day.
I strain my eyes toward the lines now lost,
I listen for the time-blurred intertone,
Just as a memory to have again my own,—
But they are gone.

ESCAPE.

DARK drizzles down a Northern day :
I close my eyes upon the gloom,
And straightway flies,
Unerring as a carrier-pigeon to its home,
My spirit, on a swifter wing ;
With dreary space outflown
It sits and suns itself
In paradise it calls its own.

In that true land
No mist can mar the plumage of its wing,
No cloud can there unbidden float,
No faint despair lies languishing ;

The seas are silver,
And the sands and waves, and woods are
 sunned ;
While to the water's edge grand trees are
 marshalled out,
And drip cool shades upon the banks below ;
On little, childish waves that play and toss,
And creep up tenderly
To coo and kiss upon the sands and moss.

Nay, nay ; no need of winter days amid the
 North,
When, freely as a bird, the spirit goeth forth
To sit among red pomegranate-trees,
And breathe soft, orange-laden breeze ;
Or watch the swaying moss
Before a carmine sunset wave ;

Or see the rose-pink curlew
Among the rushes start;
And hear such notes as, on an uncaged
 wing,
The mocking-bird can sing.
Spirit, why need the north-winds cut thee so?
Thou hast a South, perpetual, sunny:
Dream, and forget the snow.

TWILIGHT.

I SEEM to see her sweet face lean,
Bending to me again, the clouds between,
Just in the rift where glows the evening light.
In the pale gleam I see her face
Tender as some memory in a dream;
And then I know her presence there
Filters through the after-glow:
I know she is not far, but near;
I know the evening light can flow
As spirit-thrill, from hers to mine,
And she can reach me, so.

“WHEN THE TIDE HAS EBBED.”

(After the water-color by George W. Harvey.)

PRELUDE.

POET-PAINTER he,
Who carries spirit-thought within his touch,
Who catches spirit-light upon his brush.

“When the tide has ebbd,”
And rocks lie bare and brown;
When gleaming waves have rippled one by
one
Away; waves that laughed so in the morn-
ing sun,
And tossed each other in the strength of life;

The jostling waves, with hope and purpose
 rife ;

Or undulating soft, singing content, low runes
 Of mated loves and scented, rose-touched
 Junes ;

The triumph in the song of tide run high,
 The full completion, with no yearning sigh,
 The high-noon note of zenith-life and love,—
 These, when the tide has ebbed that once
 was there,

Leave echoes only on the brown rocks lone
 and bare.

Yet there, the slender stream,
 Low-ebbed to death-like rest,
 Lies calm and white between
 The frowning brown rocks' crest

And waste of desolation.

Oh, backward, backward to the joys that
were,

Yearneth it now? still stream with white
upon its brow.

Ay, low. But down upon its stillness so,

A deeper, gladder peace can flow,

A light can rest, of white, immortal glow.

AFTER-TONE.

But still the picture stands unreached

By failing pen before its impress rare:

Pure as though seraphs' eyes were bent above;

Glad as when, after death,

Surprise brings love to love.

DESPAIR.

THOU art cruel, O Despair!

Ay, grim and cold, the acme of all evil,

Picture of death art thou

To him who stands with hope upon his
brow,

While the warm sunlight nestles on his
path,

His Future smiling backward to his Now.

Yet there are hearts to whom thy ministry
were fair,

Hearts that would wed with thee and die,
Despair.

After long pains of flickering suspense,
When torturing delay has given to dread pre-
eminence,
Thy firm, cold touch would be but mercy's
breath,
Thy face, so cruel once, a gentle providence.

Then come, Despair, and let the old hope die;
Release its struggling pains to peace,
That so a new may spring:
Thus, to some cold despair
The heart a song may bring;
A welcome for its rest
And space to hope again.

CARISSIMA.

HUSH! Let the night be still,—

Did I hear it my pulse athrough?

“Carissima!”

Was it a melody from moon-touched leaf?

An effluence from the dew?

The night stoops shelteringly;

The silence seems some rhythm to hold:

“Carissima!”

Steals on the stillness, subtly, deeply sweet,—

Is this the world of old?

* * * * *

“Carissima,” that far-off night, he said;

His eyes soul-deep, his voice thrilled full and
low :

Ah, I could float me down the tides of time,
Drift gladly to the unknown, untried sea,
Could I but know some ghost of rapture
flown

Would follow me,
And I could hear again,
In the old tone,
Carissima.

AN ECHO.

THOMPSON, led by Tennyson's dream,*
Followed down the poet's stream,
Fluting clear his own sweet note,
Along thought-lilied aisles to float.

And I, spell-bound, yet far behind,
Trace their bloom-trail on the wind,
Catch echo of their flowing notes,
As smooth as rhythms from wild-bird throats;

Or watch the shadows of rare dream
That haunt the borders of the stream;

* In allusion to Tennyson's "Brook" and Maurice Thompson's "In the Haunts of Bass and Bream."

And, leaving care, I sun my soul
Where song-sunned ripples softly troll.

Dark things, like spectres, shrink away
Where spring brooks sing their rondelay ;
Their murmurs fall like soft caress
From lips that love, and fain would bless ;

And sweetly, softly croons the stream,
As mothers sing o'er infants' dream ;
The song a medium, showing true
Love's eternal presence through.

I linger where the silent brook
Stops to dream in sylvan nook,
Then purling, purling flows along,
With fern and woodbine in its song.

World-tired, I wander down the stream,
Old echoes reach me through its dream,
While welleteth in my heart the sigh,
“Loves are only born to die;”

And, with a sorrow unconfessed,
I turn me to the brook for rest,
And follow there, to sun my soul
Where song-sunned waters softly troll.

Where, with gleam and golden fleck,
Crooning, crooning, sings the beck
The sweet, old resurrection song,
“Love’s not dead, but sleepeth long.”

Crooning, “Only sleepeth, sleepeth;
Love’s not dead,—just sleepeth.”

POSSIBILITY.

It was out of darkness to some hazy glad-
ness,

An Indian Summer dream ;

I only knew the days held less of sadness,

And I was drifting on a sunnier stream.

I only knew above the cloud of darkness

Your soul had risen like an Eastern sun,

Above a sea, gray-toned and colorless,

Had risen to blow fresh mornings one by
one

Across the waves, that lay so sullen and so
gray ;

I only felt your spirit, like the sunrise,

Fall on my heart one darksome day,
And bring a blossom up to bask and
idolize.

Where speaks your voice there may be ice
and snow ;
I know it not,—I feel the warmth of tropic
clime,
Where, through the blooms, the south winds
blow,
And carry to some joy its rhyme.

And if you close your eyes upon me now,
And if your voice shall cease to speak for
me its thrill,
That it has been, could be, I yet shall know,
Nor cease to feel its sun upon me still.

SEPARATION.

GONE! But evermore will roll,
Through every strong and tender chord I
hear,
The touch and cadence of *his* soul,
Thrilling all melody with tone more deep
and clear.

And yet for evermore will fall,
In every strain of sweetness on my heart,
A low, dull cry of loss through all,
Touching that threnody where love and
life must part.

THE OLD PLACE.

YES, the old place, just the same,
The flickering shade of leafage on the grass,
Broad, sunspread hills beyond;
Perhaps their light a little colder grown,
Some touch of glory flown;
And yet, though keen, fond eyes may search
 with care,
No change substantial showeth there.

Yes, the old place, just the same,
The flickering shade of leafage on the grass,
The little purling stream;
But now its song a murmur, only, seems,
A minor of old dreams;

Sighing, to ears that long remember well,
A lurking echo of some old-time spell.

Yes, the old place, just the same,
The flickering shade of leafage on the grass ;
The stile we used to pass ;
Wild notes of free-winged birds all undis-
turbed ;
The old, old place, familiar-sweet, yet
strange.

I linger, linger with the sun and shades,
With the old sights and sounds that linger
here ;

A voice seems just to fall upon my ear,
A subtile presence in the silent air,
Pervading all, a face that once was there.

CONQUEST.

Not much of love had you said,
But its sweets, in your words so rare,
I had traced, as we trace hid flowers,
By the perfume on the air.

And when I stooped to your face,
Where the aspen quivered down,
My lips in a nested kiss,
I felt the conqueror's crown.

I knew my valley of bliss
A seraphim-guarded glen,
And the blossoms that were mine
Were lost to all other men.

TO A WILD LILY.

O LILY! with tall and slender stem,
And scarlet, against the wood's dark hem,—
Thus bloomed you once in the years
 agone,
Steeped in summer and sunshine,
As my heart was steeped in song.

Now, lily born in the wildwood,
The years have travelled their ways;
To-day you stand strange and rootless
In the pool of a Parian vase;
Beside you, in chalice of silver,
Rare roses a queen might praise.

But my eyes turn back to *you*, lily,
Again and again to your face;
And the magnet thus to draw me,
Is it orange-scarlet and gold?
Or, in your urn of free-born grace,
Is it the lost day that you hold?

THE LOST THREADS.

How, through our lives, the lines are woven
in and out!

How, through rare fabrics, threads are
brought and lost to view!

The fairest seem the briefest.

The gold glints only here and there upon
the best brocade,

And as we live our loves drop out.

Lost threads, they seem,

And memory backward turns to catch their
gleam.

But in the purple haze

Where sets the sun, and some far future
lies,

Half gleaming through, the stars are in the
skies ;

And lying just beyond our mortal ken,
The old, lost lights will gleam for us again.
Not lost were they,

Only as a child, failing to find its mother,
calls her lost.

Yet hid, the loves, so many those who
through some change,

Some chance of life—or death—have fallen
away :

But there, beyond the sunset and the haze,
There shall we find them, find them every
one ;

The old, lost threads,—

Again to weave themselves into our lives;
For the lost lapse
Making the pattern but the fairer far,
Like sky of night,—dark space, and then a
jewelled star.

SUGGESTION.

A BREATH of sandal spice from off her fan,
While she at distance stands ;
A dainty, rustling robe I dare not touch ;
Forbidden fruit, her hands.

Fair lips that smile from isolated heights ;
Half-tender words, and rare ;
Sometimes a half-concealèd, softened flash,
Then eyelids white droop there.

Sometimes a graceful, generous thought for
me ;
Graceful, but only kind ;
Sometimes a half-caught cadence of her voice
Seems holding sweets behind.

Ah, falsehood fair, when hope comes whispering soft

That buds like this can last:

The blossom blooms,—a moment's rapture rare,

And then—the petals fade—the bliss is past.

HAUNTED.

SISTER CELESTE (the priests had called her
saint,

So high she dwelt above all earthly taint)
Sat in her convent tower above the sea,
Where sweeps the tide on rock-bound Nor-
mandie.

Her eyes, where dwelt a golden-hazel dream,
Looked off across the waters' sunset gleam;
Eyes of still light, serenely calm their ray,
As looking to some heavenward-lying day.

Taught only of the church and churchly
lore,

This virgin saint had vowed for evermore

To shun all worldly life, and only raise
The love-light of her eyes to heaven's praise.

Peaceful had been her tower above the sea,
With naught to ruffle each day's rosary;
But, when she turned toward her window's
height

To look across the waters' western light,

One figure stood against the paling skies,
Always a grim, dark cross, in Roman-wise.
"'Tis well," she sighed, "the bride of this
to be
And enter heaven saintly pure and free."

Then turned she to her cell's white wall to
pray
Before some shrine of saint, or taper's ray.

So passed in peace the days of Saint Celeste,
Haunted alone by that still cross against the
West.

Then, on a day, a flood of bloom-fresh
spring
Burst through her window on a May-breeze
wing,
And, leaning, on a bough beneath
She saw a nested bird, amid the blossoms'
wreath ;

And singing, swaying, on another spray,
Its mate, life-full, love-free, among the May.
The crucifix seemed hanging in the far-off
haze,—
She tried to cross herself as in the yester-
days.

Off on the path below, with measured tread,
There paced a priest, and told his beads
with bared head.

How broad and firm his strength of height!
What tender grace his lips' sweet light!

The priest looked up,—and Saint Celeste
looked down,—

His gray eyes met the hazel dream of hers,—
The old, old story in one glance! and
then,—

Another story, old and sad, told once again.

Out on the tree the apple blossoms fade,
The bird's song dies away toward the South,
And for a priest and nun
One moment of the past holds all of life.

One moment,—
Just a flash-light of a morn in May,
A tree with birds and bloom,
A tower,
Fair eyes of golden-hazel dream,
Deep eyes of gray:—
And then a clang of convent bell,
The swift dream's knell.

Day by day a broad sea stretching to the
West,
Day by day its color lifeless gray,
And haunted always by a Roman cross,
And eyes that turn away.

SELECTION.

O PAST so sweet!

So sure in thy retreat!

What would I beg from thee?

What gift from out thy hoard to throw to
me?

Surely thou mockest me.

Ah, Past! soft sailing there,

Like island floating fair

In some far, amber air;

Like bubble from a crystal space out-blown,

Floating with such a witching glow and
grace,

Yet the unreachable so haloing thy face

That I can scarce believe thee once my
own;

I pray, but as to god on throne of stone;
Deaf, pagan god, who heeds not to my
moan;

One gift so sweet, yet small, I ask of thee:
Were it too much that this should granted
be?

Looking thy jewels o'er, I only ask,
Chosen from out the rubies of thy casque,
From out the days with warmth and roses
red,

And whispers of true passion overspread;
I only ask:
From out thy pearls strung white on strands
of peace,

(Days where the fresh song-mornings never
cease;)

From out thy sapphires with their flames of
blue,

(Days when thy heart beat high, thy eyes
shone true;)

From out thy opals with their unterrestrial
gleam,

(Days when to live meant only days to
dream;)

From out thy beryls, daintiest jewel there,
(Like hint of love to come breathed on the
air;)

Rare days, crowned high with conquest all
unsought,

Wearing proud coronet with triumphs inter-
wrought,

I bow before thee as to liege and king,
And one small prayer from out my heart I
bring:

O Past! I only, all thy treasures gleaming
'there,

Pray for that touch again upon my hair.

WHITMAN'S LAST TESTIMONY.

HIGH faith the bard had spoken,
Strong hope his voice had sung,
And brave as death of warrior
His last life-notes had rung.

For truth his lips had struggled,
And lived he to his creed;
Nor weak conservatism
Held him from higher deed.

Fearless,—his life lived truly,—
His heart and brain his own,—
Fitting, to him was given
That after-wraith, night shown.

He who had peered all frankly,
With wistful eyes so brave,
Into the deepening shadows
That reached him from the grave;

Claiming never the unknown,
Content alone with truth,
Yet trust and faith unsullied,
The grander, without proof;

Yes, fitting it was given
To soul like his to show
A glimpse of the immortal
To mortal left below.

The spirit-face of Whitman,
Chiselled in cloud-like white,

Floating before the stranger
Against the shield of night;

Unknown, but after, proven,
A sculpture stronger stands
Than the poets old in marble
Dug from Carrara's strands:

For, in the thought Pantheon,
This face—beyond its fade—
Stands firmer than stone statues
Of abbeyes' classic shade.

THE OWL RESTS.

I WATCHED through the measures of the
night,

I saw the pale, weird Northern Light
Athwart the blackness flicker up
And fade and fail.

I saw the lights of earth
Glare and stare for full their worth;
Long in the dark
Glittered their lurid spark;

I smiled me then, atween the sheltering
boughs:

"Shine on, shine on, in all thy haunting
dimness,

Sparks of earth,
Shine on, thy life is short, I know thy birth."
My eyes strained wide, I waited patiently
The sheer, unsullied night to see ;
The night unmarred
And silver-starred.

Hard by me, in the dell,
Swift waters kissed the silent spell,
The while the earth in its own shade
Sought shelter from the day ;
And darkness, brooding over vale and croft,
Sat timely down, with feathers soft.
Now, late, the lurid earth-lights fade away ;
Through the clear dark I see the sights,
I hear the sounds,
Are seen not, heard not in the day.

Earth's transitories lie, dark-wrapt away ;
And while the stars smile down,
The strong, clear stars,
Under the night's high crest
I find me, rest.

A ROSE WHISPER.

A CHALICE of perfume
I hold to the air;
And blow the winds here,
Or blow the winds there,
Whether East or West,
Some one shall be blest.

FIRE-FLIES.

SOFT twinkle they, ephemerally,
Dotting the hour 'twixt night and day,
Sprinkling the gloaming gray
With fire that burns not, nor illuminates
For any space around:
Yet brave, beneath the high, fair stars
Their own to hold, however slight it be;
Comparing neither great nor small,
But giving of what heaven gave them, all.
Perchance, amid the garden's scented gloom,
The unconscious rose and lily give them
room;
And they, free-flitting in all-thoughtless grace,
May light some rose or lily's fading face.

ÆOLIAN ALLEGORY.

SILVER-SHOT stood the forest

With darts from Dian's bow,

While winds of the soft Ægean

Slumbered faint, slumbered low,

In the silver, shifting cradles

Of the Orient's classic sea;

Nestling soft as a bird can rest

In its swaying nest on the tree.

And Thetis, sandalled in silver,

Passing that way, I ween,

Touched to a gentle rock, the waves,

Though never her foot was seen.

But the track of her tinselled slipper
Left the shimmering crests aglow,
While over Diana's forest
Fell the flame of her pale flambeau.

And woods and sea seemed to listen,
Soft-touched by the silvery white,
To lie and look upward in silence
And listen for songs from the night.

And Dian's forest, and Thetis' sea
Looked each to its goddess own,
To wake the chord of life's symphony,
The True, that the earth shall zone.

Then hark! Through the leaves a whisper
stirs,
A song sweeps over the seas;

Eolus, the free, has wandered that way,
With his all-encircling breeze.

He whispers the Ægean Sea
Some tale of Eastern spice ;
He hums soft rondels o'er and o'er,
Caught up in Paradise.

He finds his harp already strung
Where'er his feet may roam,
His instrument wide as nature,
The universe his home.

His lyre may take the shape of a leaf,
'Twill breathe him a life-tone true,
Or the surging wave may yield to his touch,
Its rhythm old, yet new.

He knows the East, he knows the West,
The varying zones are his;
The poles with their snow and ice for crest;
The tropic his garden is.

He leans his ear to heart of palm,
The throb he hears is rich and warm;
But his soul fails not to catch an accord
In the battle-cry of Northern storm.

Ay, true cosmopolite, he roves
With spirit strong, perception free;
He thrills alike to myrtle groves,
Or lights on polar sea.

Secrets of pines are his, scent-blown;
He catches the hint in the sea-shell's tone,

Or sweeps the withered grass of a grave
And grieves with the heart that's alone.

He carries the dreams of violet beds
In through the curtained window there,
And wafts away some words that are said,
And it matters not whether the prayer

Is mingled with Mongolian tears
That drop upon a wasted child,
Or if some Christian mother's fears
Breathe out her cry, unreconciled.

And over wild Atlantic ways,
In the Red-man's Sunset Land,
He mingles with the pulsing life
His strong, free breath has fanned.

He floats wild Alabamian songs

Across the cotton-snow and rice,

And hums sweet snatches o'er and o'er

Caught up in Paradise.

True to his catholicity,

His touch can feel the same heart-beat

In classic dream of Thessaly

Or cloistered monk's retreat.

Roaming through labyrinthian ways

Among Ægean isles,

He croons some dream to sleep again,

So soft his voice beguiles :

And whispers to the shores of Thrace

Of clove-bloom on the Isles of Spice ;

Crooning soft rondels o'er and o'er,
Caught up in Paradise.

And on the strands of Mitylene,
Where Sappho sang her passion-fire,
His faint night-chords are echoing
On her deserted lyre ;

Or under moon of Thessaly
He breathes some sighing serenade ;
Then bugles down a leaf-stripped vale
His wild fanfaronade.

Or marshals from the west and north,
From steppe and glacier bringeth forth,
Forces of high, resistless will
That hint to man heaven's high "Be still."

Ay, universal, touching all,
Master of Nature's varied harp,
He hears the full, rich chord of Life;
No string at variance or strife.

Rifling bloom from apple-boughs,
He scatters hope with lavish hand;
The bloom may fall, the rose-tint fade,
But back of these the fruit shall stand.

For him Earth rings a symphony
In tune with key-note of the spheres;
For her he sees the grand "To Be,"
Though still in travail, oft with tears.

(Ay, tears! Fine, tender harmony.
What gift so sweet the earth has found?

Could angel give more royally
Than tear upon another's wound?)

He gathers blending threads of life
Across the wide creation's loom;
He sees the pattern woven true
With a life and love and worship One.

In the mingled, mystic murmurs
Of the Arathusian fount,
He hears the orisons of Rome
As breath of Olymp's Mount.

The great, all-rising spirit-sap,
The strong bud-burst of life,
Is thrilled to him from blossom's breath
Or from some wrestling strife.

He dreams, though orange blossoms for terrestrial bride,

The lily flowers for one

No less a bride, although the bloom

Wreathes altar called a tomb.

He breathes his thought and strikes some life afire,

Or croons from out his heart some sweet desire,

Some dream of his that will not die nor faint,

Wreathed with forget-me-nots upon his lyre.

He dreams,—and sighs across some Western sea

A breath of wasted spice,

Yet whispers still his rondel o'er,
Caught up in Paradise.

Or in some crypt of Italy
He chants above the patient dead
A note of resurrection-life,
An Easter song-bloom o'er them spread.

Nay,—not resurrection; Life is one;
We rise not, for we never fall;
Not one heart-beat of time is lost,
For Life is "Lord of All."

He hears no words, "Come, worship me,"
But "Live toward the Light:"
He bends his knee to pure and free,
In all creeds finding Right.

He plays upon each string that's strung,
His touch with each in tune;
Life the one theme, on ice-chilled stream
Or perfumed bud of June.

Then sing me thy song of Life, O Wind!
Of a deathless essence strong
And free and wide as all living things;
I keep with thy note along.

The pæan rises, "Life—Life!
There is no death—no long despair;
Life—Love—Growth—Light,—
These, quiver all the air."

* * * * *

Diana may reign in her forest;
Thetis may sovereign her sea;
But I, to the God that embraces all
Do I bow and bend my knee.

TO CATHARINE VAN NEST.

ARE you out beyond the starlight,

Sweet Catharine Van Nest?

Lies it in space so far remote,

That region of the blest?

Do you find there earth-born flowers,

Oh, saint of blooms below?

Do blossom spirits breathe on thee

From fields of long ago?

'Tis not upon the walks of gold

I see thy lingering feet,

But straying out some flowery way
Beyond the beaten street.

There, where the birds are singing thee
Some old-time note of June,
And bees among the hanging buds
Hum a familiar rune :

There, among by-ways strewn with grace,
By-ways so like thine own,
Perchance thou listenest, through the space,
To catch some lost earth-tone.

'Tis not amid the gold-crowned throng
I look to see thy face,
But up some violet-odored path
My heart thy steps will trace ;

And Memory, following by old ways,
Ways that she knoweth best,
Will meet thee there among the flowers,
Sweet Catharine Van Nest.

IN THE CHURCH OF THE LILIES.

STANDS it as mirage in the air,
But spirit forms its structure there;

And real this, perchance, as stone,
If rock or thought must stand alone.

Its colors gleam in green and white,
Symbols of growth, of blooms of light.

Above the door faint lilies twine,
And drop soft bells like columbine.

Tall, slender spires reach toward the sky,
Like shoots of life by light drawn high;

And ivy clings about the place
As loving thought to some lost face.

By day, within, the sun flows through
Long windows of deep, mellow hue,

And a soft glory of white light
Falls from the ceiling's vaulted height,

Drops down within the chancel rail
On carven lilies tall and pale:

Lilies that round a chalice stand
Of chiselled onyx, deftly planned,

Holding within the silence there
The high, white light from heaven's air.

On nights when stars are well outshone,
And peerless reigns the moon alone,

And drops a ray divinely white
Into the chancel's lone, still night,

One worshipper steals there to kneel,
Strong doors, and barred, to her unreal ;

Nor make they e'en resistance slight
To the strong power of her love's might.

Before the moon-touched lilies' grace
She kneels, with rapture in her face ;

For in the dim night-chancel there,
Above the lilies pure and rare,

By sweet affinity seems drawn
A presence fair as early dawn;

A child's lost face, so saintly fair,
Shows through the consecrated air.

And when the strange world knoweth not,
The earth-soul oft will enter there,

Through the doors so barred and strong;
She worships not amid the throng.

And if she carry a lost love
Within her heart while kneeling where

That lost face seems to touch her own;
And if against her cheek seems blown,

All in the stillness of the place,
A ringlet from that angel face,

The touch so light, the gleam so gold,
As in those long-gone days of old,

Till she, forgetting all else there,
Kneels only to that vision fair;

Yet he who spake on Orient's breeze
The music, "If ye love not these,"

Will bend above, and gather there
Her love, even as heaven-sent prayer.

ON THE CARIBBEAN.

O CARIBBEAN! rich in sun and shells!

Full soft and warm thy waters kiss thy
strands;

And billowed o'er with bloom and palm, thy
sunny lands;

Thy days thrilled through with song-dreams;

Thy nights afloat in zephyrs silver-blown;

Thy passion-speech borne out on perfumed
breeze;

And flower-breath, and spice, thy only sighs,
Beneath thy tender, bending, love-enraptured
skies.

And in thy soft and scent-fanned tropic night
Thy Lorelei comes out and sings bewitching
strains,

That charm not down to realms beneath,
But only up, from darkness and from pains.
Her gold hair floating on the waves' white
wreath,
Sings she some song all soft,
And rich with warmth and color Carib-
bean,
Yet clear, and true and pure
As caught from out the empyrean.
Fine flutes the note
From out her charmèd throat,
And on that silver, southern sea
I see, again, a boat
Glide darkly out upon the silver sheen,
And old love-bells,
That memory tells,
Float out again across the Caribbean.

O Caribbean! warm thy waters wave,
And throw soft kisses while thy stars bend
down;

Bend leal and true above,
And light up as can light strong eyes of
love.

And there, between the silver sky and sea,
Where I can hear, still drifted down to
me

The echo of an old love-note;
There, on the glistening night,
My boat afloat,
I still can lie in dreams;
Nor yet alone my spirit seems;
We two float there, in silver dream,
Upon the moon-white waves
Infiltered by the soft Gulf-stream.

O Caribbean! on your soft, warm waves
You rock old memories that will not sleep;
Year after year you rock your cradle,
Sing your rhyme;
But memory will wake,
To dream or weep,
Though the dead sleep.
Here, cradled on this soft, enraptured night,
With years behind to hush an anguish down,
I float; and nearer seems the forward than
the backward shore:
So can I drift and dream,—
Such memory behind,
And, gleaming like a haven true across a
phantom night,
Such hope before.

A SIGH OF THE SOUTH WIND.

BECAUSE I had no crystal snow,
No flower such as ice-winds blow,
No cool, crisp airs that fan away the sun,
No tonic like a philter of strong life
That fills the veins with hope and purpose
 rife,
They carried her away, the sweet, frail thing,
And down my orange vale I sob,—I cannot
 sing.

I weep away my blossoms to the earth,
And draw dark veils between me and the
 moon;
I cannot see its silver noon

So glad and fair all things upon

When *she* is gone.

I rove among the citron-trees

Like some faint ghost of other breeze,

Nor dally over sweetest bloom,

Nor trifle with the tasselled broom,

But sigh and sigh along my southern sea

Because all dead life seems to me.

I linger where the cypress shade

Haunts some deserted everglade;

I waste my bard-sung perfume on the air

With all the profligacy of despair.

Then rise I, in some southern night,

My sweets all freshened by the silent
dew,

And blow and blow, against all hope,

Toward the cold stars of the North.

O Love! but catch a scented breath across
the snow

And know

I blow caress to you.

INSPIRATION.

IF I were in that other world,—
O Love of mine so lost and yet not dead!—
I might be nearer to thee, so;
Thou from whom my higher, truer life is fed.
Perhaps my phosphorescent form might be,
Through thy still mortal veil, invisible to thee;
Perhaps my ether voice
So faint would vibrate on this heavier air
That thou wouldst yet unconscious be,
Nor dream that thou wert where
One, now long forgot, wert calling thee.

Yet now, though far,
I can but follow thee,

As sun compels a star ;
And when my purest thought within me rise,
I trace it to remembered glory of thy eyes ;
And I would take the spirit-form,
And follow where
Thy presence thrills and consecrates the air.

'Tis not that, spirit-blown,
Some effluence might flow from me to thee ;
'Tis not that I might better so thy spirit fill ;
But I, in spite of pain,
Would stand anear and learn thee still.

From off thy heights would blow
Again the bracing purity of Alpine snow,
Where yet such grace as thine
Can wreathe and twine,

And blossom from the crests of highest
moods,

As Edelweiss can fringe its altitudes ;

And not all cold because so high :

The sun falls on the Alpine snow

With rarer glow

Than colors baser things within the vale
below :

The red warmth of the sand shows murk and
weak

Against such rays as touch the snow-crowned
peak.

O far-off Love ! who knoweth naught of love
of mine,

I drink thy spirit's strength

As those who, faint, drink wine.

And if some fragrance blows
Where bleak and bare the path lies toward
 the sea,
And brings me back the breath of a lost
 Araby,
It blows from off some dead, pressed flower
 of memory ;
From out some spicèd silence,
Where I can dream of thee.

CLOISTER SHADOWS.

(A MOONLIGHT MONOCHROME.)

ON nights when the moon came out
And hung, a full, round disk,
Above the cloister tower,
And turned to phantom silver-gray
The ether sea above,
And seemed to draw men's souls
Beyond the sphere of self
To some high plane of love;
Seeming to touch, with soft, strange thrill,
The mortal with the immortal near:
On nights like this,
The air all hushed to still;

The leaves their breath withheld
Under the moon's white kiss;
'Twas said a form came out
And paced the cloister-shadowed walk.

And none could tell
Whether the form were flesh or spirit,
Human or divine.
So firm its tread,
Such manly shape and mien,
Some scarce could think, I ween,
But this were mortal man.
Pondering, it walked across the moonlight
 silhouettes
Of tower and spire and rigid cross of Rome;
Paced ponderingly, as bent on spirit-truth to
 scan;

Something, perchance,
Which only half elusive seemed to him,
Though hid beyond all glimpse from day-
light's daily man.

Then something from out the shadows deep
Would creep ;
Another form ; though fainter it would seem,
As fragile as some wreck of hope
Or wraith of perished dream.

None doubted this a phantom,
Whether of living or of dead.
Perchance 'twas but a thought in form
That walked behind him
Through the patterns fair of moon and
shade ;

That turned when he turned,
And faithfully followed.
A thought in form, perchance ;
The astral of some flesh-housed soul.
Her eyes held homage for the figure pacing
there
With firm and stately tread before,
Unconscious but of moon and shadows fair,
Nor dreaming he of steps by his steps led,
Of soul on worship fed,
That turned not to some far, fair star,
But found in him its avatar.

And month by month, when the moon was
full

And sky swept clear of cloud
In all the interspace between the silver island

And the low, shadowing cloister tower ;
Month by month, when the moon was full,
The legend tells,
The figures glided up and down
Beneath the dim, old cloister wall ;
The one, unnoticed, following like a prayer ;
The other, pacing there,
Held by some charm
That only on a spirit-height may fall.
Stately and slow, in the weird, bewitching night,
The figures passed
Along the rough-edged shadow of the
parapet ;
Gleamed lustrous fair and white
In the patches of pale light ;
Then, through the shade-thrown profile of a
tower or spire,

Up to the broad-paved steps ;
He, turning at the shadow of the cross,
Sometimes his eyes a moment on the silver-
 poplar there ;—
Strong eyes, and clear, that rested tenderly
Upon the quivering leaves
Twice silvered on such nights as these ;
Twice happy leaves, to hold affinity
For eyes like his.
Bride of his soul, it seemed,
Might be such night,
So silver-white.

And she who, still and mist-like, walked
 behind,
(As pure as lily breath blown on the wind
Seemed all her soul,

Self-lost in thought of him,)—

She also saw the quivering moonlit leaves,
But scarce remembered she had loved them
long before,

Loving them now athrough *his* love ;
Seeing them through his sight, his eyes ;
Through soul of his feeling the pathos of
their whispered sighs.

Once, they were sweet to her ;
But sacred, now, as some high thing above,
For *he* had looked on them with eyes of
love.

And he so loved this cloister-shadowed place,
When silver-clear above spread the broad,
moonlit space,

She all forgot how she had cared to trace,
In days of earliest past,

Shadows moon-chiselled on the stone or
grass ;

For now a deeper, purer meaning stole,
(Through him,)

From light and shadow, on her soul.

And wraith-like, pale, and still,
She could but follow where
His steps so loved to linger ; there,
Where some far spirit-height
Seemed all the air to enthrill.
Unseen, unknown, she yet must follow there,
And clasp all brave and still
Her grim but white despair ;
So, leaving all, through lights and shadows
dim,

If only as a wraith, to follow him :

To look upon the white light on his brow ;
To catch the glow, strong, soul-touched, of
 his eye,
Such as dwells not in eyes of other men ;
And feel the fetter,
Mystic, yet divinely sweet as silver-linked
 moonbeam,
Still bind her to him, even through despair ;
Touching her shadowed life with just a
 dream.

TIME.

How few the hours that wear the deep car-
mine,

Or hold the rich bouquet of rose-red wine !

Yet through the dull, pale gray of every
day

Some thread of purpose strong and true
must twine.

UNCONQUERED.

THE conqueror rode along the line
Drawn up from the conquered ranks,
And each knee knelt on the blood-stained
floor,

As the monarch rode before ;
Till he stopped in surprise at a slender maid,
Who stood with proudly raised head.

“Thou wilt bow to me?” he half gallantly
said.

“I bow not down to power,” said she,
That little maid of Thessaly,

“I kneel alone to Love ;
And love is but love when just and true ;

As to all, the skies are free and blue."

"Strike her down!" cried the guard behind,

Dashing forward with his lance.

But the maid drew her head in queenly
pride,

And turned an unfaltering glance

Upon the wrath-wrought warrior's face,

Till his own eyes fell with a softened grace.

"Strike me," she said, "I am not afraid."

"Carest thou not for thy young life, maid?"

"But life, to me, would be no dower

Apart from love, and crushed by power."

"Forsooth, I like thy heart of steel,

But when thou prayest, thou must kneel.

There *is* a power, by your dark eye

I swear! to make you kneel before you
die."

A light like warmth of sunshine filled her
face :

“God were not God, were his heart less than
grace.

Not to power of earth, or power above,
Could I kneel me down, except to Love.
A *God* asks not surrender to his *might* ;
Should such a power slay, a higher
Would lift me from the ashes to Love’s
height.”

The knight forgot his ire,
And rode away,
As he had caught a glimpse
Of some sun-breaking day.

SERENADE.

DROP deeper, night!

Draw closer thy dusky veil around;

Shut out the light!

And silence all daylight's restless sound:

So better I can whisper soft wooings to my
love,

Thy darkling deeps encircling, thy silver stars
above.

The silent stars

Are burning fair tapers to the night,

And gallant Mars,

Full valiant, comes out in armor bright;

Hear scented sighs of pine-trees yield low
notes to the breeze,
Like echo from some Lorelei, far out on
silver seas.

The whippoorwill,
Soft calling down in the deepening grove,
With tender thrill
His symphony will croon to answering love.
Or if thy heart, all shyly, hold answer from
thy tongue,
Thy moonlit eyes will whisper what words
could ne'er have sung.

Come closer, heart!
Come closer, rest on this heart of mine;
Come, ne'er to part!

Thy presence will bring me life divine.

Come to me in the night-time, come to me
in the day;

My sun and moon, my star, my love,—the
LIGHT to me alway.

LOVE'S OATH.

LOVE thee? Thus I swear it,—

Though the stars should crumble down,
My love would bud and blossom,

And wreathe thee with its crown.

Though winds should drop their music,

Death, waves of absence roll,

A strand of memory twined with thee

Would blossom on my soul.

SONG SECRET.

I'LL whisper to thee
A secret from me,
O beautiful, silent moon!
On the ocean afloat
Soft saileth a boat—
My heart beateth true in tune;
Sweet moon,
My heart beateth true in tune.

Oh, silver the sea,
Oh, light him to me,
Shine faithful, but still, sweet moon;
My heart's tender stress
No other must guess;

We'll whisper in mystic rune,
Sweet moon,
We'll whisper in mystic rune.

When I whisper, "'Tis he,
Fast sailing to me,"
The story is there, sweet moon;
For names you don't care,
And need the world share
In secrets of ours, still moon,
Sweet moon?
In secrets of ours, sweet moon?

TO THE NIGHT.

BURN me a jewel,
Flash me a gem,
Light me a torch
On thy high diadem.

Days have grown dreary,
Life but a sigh;
Love lies awounded,
Praying to die.

Earth's joys are paling,
So fade the day!
Night, let my soul
On thy wings soar away.

Light me with starlight,
Lead me afar,
Let my soul touch the peace
Of some still, silver star.

So let my astral
Wander with thee;
So let my heart
From the old life be free.

So may nepenthe
Dull the old pain;
So may some new hope
Flame up again.

Cool blows thy breathing,
"Death to all wrong;"
This is the note, Night,
I hear in thy song.

Brave are the reaches
Where thy fires burn;
“Life-essence eternal”
The light that I learn.

My brain is aweary,
My fainting heart sore,
Hope, prostrate, lies wailing
Some sad nevermore:

Night, burn me a jewel,
Flash me a gem,
Light me some torch
On the day's fading hem.

THE END.

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